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ABSTRACT

In view of the necessity for an evaluation instrument with a degree of objectivity for rating the Master of Arts oral examinations, a rating scale is described that requires little additional time on the part of the professor. The scale covers factors of depth and breadth of subject coverage, research, organization, and presentation. The ratings range from very poor to excellent. Using 31 degree candidates as subjects of the investigation, the study revealed that the instrument is a relatively reliable one which deserves further consideration in the evaluation of candidates. (LH)

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A RATING SCALE FOR MASTER'S ORALS

Dr. Granville B. Johnson

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the master's oral examination may be mere protocol or it may be the final significant hurdle for the master's degree. If it is the latter, an evaluation instrument with a degree of objectivity is essential.

There are more elaborate approaches, but the one presented here requires little additional time for busy professors.

PROBLEM:

The problem is to ascertain the effectiveness of a rating scale devised for the evaluation of Master of Arts oral examinations.

MATERIALS:

A rating scale was devised by ten members of the Graduate Faculty in the College of Education at a Southern University. There was little initial disagreement on the suggested weights and the final weight is the average of the ten.

SUBJECTS:

Thirty-one Master of Arts degree candidates are the subjects of this investigation. Each was evaluated during the Master's orals by a team composed of three members of the Graduate Faculty.

RESULTS:

Reliability:

Using a random-split of each of the interviewer teams, a Pearson Product moment coefficient of correlation of .52 ($p < .01$) was derived. This represents the reliability of scoring.

Validity:

There is no better measure of competency available at the time of testing than the Graduate Faculty evaluation; hence, there is no true criterion against which to correlate the ratings.

NORMS:

The following table derived from 93 ratings presents the means, sigmas, and quartiles of the sample under consideration:

TABLE I

MEANS, SIGMAS, AND QUARTILES OF SAMPLE

$\bar{x}$	$S_{\bar{x}}$	S	25th percentile	75th percentile
53	1.5	14	43	63

There is no tendency toward skewness, and distribution appears normal.

CONCLUSIONS:

It may be concluded that the instrument under consideration is a relatively reliable one which deserves further consideration in the evaluation of M. A. degree candidates.

Derivation of a cut-off point may be useful, e.g., any score below 32 (-1.5 sigma units) is in the lowest 10 per cent (an absolute evaluation of "Poor" in all categories would yield a score of 32) and requires reconsideration of the candidate.

RATING SCALE OF MASTER'S ORAL

FACTOR	WEIGHT	DEFINITION	EVALUATION 1 Very Poor	2 Poor	3 Fair	4 Very Good
Coverage: Depth	5 (wt. x eval.)	Specificity, relevance, accuracy, precision, insight.	Inaccurate and irrelevant.	Some accuracy and relevance.	Accuracy balanced with inaccuracy.	Quite accur Some cloudi
Coverage: Breadth	5 (wt. x eval.)	Ability to see interrelationships with allied fields and significant relevant material in area. Integration of divergent parts into meaningful whole.	No ability to see interrelationships within or between fields.	Little ability to see relationships within and/or between fields.	Some ability to see relationships within and between fields.	Considerabl ability to relationshi within and between the fields.
Research	3 (wt. x eval.)	Knowledge of significant recent and relevant research particularly from periodical literature within and between areas. Knowledge of the language of research.	Very limited knowledge or research. Lack of acquaintance with language.	Some knowledge of research and ability to read it in the original.	Some ability to read original research and evidence of having done it.	Ability to and interp Some eviden of acquaint with recent literature.
Organization	2 (wt. x eval.)	Logical sequence of presentation. Cause to effect, important to less important.	No logical pattern or logical juxtaposition.	Little logical sequence.	Some logical organization. Some deficiencies.	Logical se- quence. So significant omissions.
Presentation	1 (wt. x eval.)	Sentence and paragraph construction, grammar, spelling, vocabulary.	Glaring errors.	Significant errors. Some evidence of education.	Some mistakes.	Very few significant errors.

RATING SCALE OF MASTER'S ORAL

	DEFINITION	EVALUATION 1 Very Poor	2 Poor	3 Fair	4 Very Good	5 Excellent	COMMENT
c)	Specificity, relevance, accuracy, precision, insight.	Inaccurate and irrelevent.	Some accuracy and relevance.	Accuracy balanced with inaccuracy.	Quite accurate. Some cloudiness.	Very accurate and specific.	
.)	Ability to see interrelationships with allied fields and significant relevant material in area. Integration of divergent parts into meaningful whole.	No ability to see interrelationships within or between fields.	Little ability to see relationships within and/or between fields.	Some ability to see relationships within and between fields.	Considerable ability to see relationships within and between the fields.	Ability to see subtle relationships within and between the fields.	
.)	Knowledge of significant recent and relevant research particularly from periodical literature within and between areas. Knowledge of the language of research.	Very limited knowledge or research. Lack of acquaintance with language.	Some knowledge of research and ability to read it in the original.	Some ability to read original research and evidence of having done it.	Ability to read and interpret. Some evidence of acquaintance with recent literature.	Ability to read and interpret research articles and evidence of wide reading.	
.)	Logical sequence of presentation. Cause to effect, important to less important.	No logical pattern or logical juxtaposition.	Little logical sequence.	Some logical organization. Some deficiencies.	Logical sequence. Some significant omissions.	Logical organization. Includes significant relationships.	
)	Sentence and paragraph construction, grammar, spelling, vocabulary.	Glaring errors.	Significant errors. Some evidence of education.	Some mistakes.	Very few significant errors.	No significant errors of composition. Lucid construction and presentation.	